CSREES Portfolio Review Expert Panel Report Summary

Portfolio 1.4 Structure of the Agricultural Sector and Farm Management
CY 1999 - 2003

SUMMARY

External Review Completed: July 2004

Portfolio Description

The U.S. agricultural sector must be able to quickly respond to changing political, economic, technological, environmental, and consumer-driven market forces. Agricultural production and markets are constantly affected by external factors such as weather and growing conditions, diseases and pests, financial conditions, cultural practices, and consumer demand. New and emerging risks associated with domestic and international policy, genetic technology, exotic invasive species, and complex agricultural diseases that can affect humans defy conventional means of identification, quantification, and management. CSREES contributes to the improvement and strengthening of this responsive agricultural system through sponsoring research into alternative methods to identify, assess, and manage risk, providing relevant education, and extending information and practices to improve production and market decision-making through enhanced risk management. Portfolio 1.4 includes Knowledge Areas:

- KA 601 Farm Management and Risk Management
- KA 401, Structures, Facilities, and General Purpose Farm Supplies
- KA 402, Engineering Systems and Equipment
- KA 404, Instrumentation and Control Systems

Summary of Comments and Recommendations

In 2004 a panel comprised of independent experts from the field was convened to assess and score the current state of the Structure of the Agricultural Sector and Farm Management Portfolio. A discussion of specific comments and recommendations related to each of the dimensions of the three Office of Management and Budget (OMB) research and development (R&D) criteria used (relevance, quality, and performance) is provided below.

Relevance

The scope of work generally meets expectations. CSREES needs to be a more proactive leader in research, extension, and teaching to meet critical needs. Identification of contemporary and emerging issues is good. The necessary transition to more integrated work has been accomplished and is going quite well. The application of multidisciplinary approaches within this portfolio falls short of expectations. Work on sensors will need to be multidisciplinary and integrated with other sciences (physics, chemistry and biology) outside of historically traditional working relationships.

Quality

Stakeholder input is at a high level and Stakeholders are well served by this portfolio. The historical alignment of the portfolio with stakeholder needs seems to be good and current and appropriate methodologies are used.

Performance

Productivity meets expectations. CSREES appears to administer its programs fairly and objectively.
Some uncertainty on timeliness exists because of the lack of documentation. CSREES needs to be able to report outputs and impacts according to criteria that meet OMB requirements, and also be able to effectively communicate the impact of CSREES programs to all stakeholders via scholarly and stakeholder-oriented communication channels.

Portfolio 1.4 was difficult to assess because of its mixture of unrelated engineering and economics programs. The Panel recommends the creation of two separate portfolios in the future: one focused on engineering and perhaps called "Farm Structures and Technologies for Agriculture;" the second focused on "Farm Management," making it more parallel to the topics and titles of Portfolio 1.1 and 1.2.

Portfolio Score

Portfolio 1.4 received a total score of 73 from the panel. This score places the portfolio in the category ‘moderately effective in supporting CSREES objectives.’